

INCOMING TELEGRAM

EXCISE

N076

Department of State

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FROM: Belgrade

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1339, March 18, 10 p.m.

RECEIVED BY *[Signature]* DATE *3/18/53*
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discussed Albania freely today. He said conditions there were bad and were gradually deteriorating but that he knew of no startling developments over last few weeks nor any that could be attributed to Stalin's death. He was convinced that both Hodja and Shehu were "temperamentally as well as politically" faithful to Soviet Union and would follow new regime as they had Stalin's. Nor was there reason to believe that Hodja regime's grip on country had lessened since Stalin's death. Gradually deteriorating economic conditions and correspondingly increasing popular discontent pointed to inevitable collapse of regime at some time in future but this time not in sight. Meanwhile incumbent on Western powers to act with greatest circumspection in order to avoid giving grounds to Cominform charges of aggressive action or intent toward Albania. Moral ascendancy of Western world over Soviet world, *[initials]* *plissin** belief of peoples that West is truly non-aggressive and peace-loving and disbelief in Soviet charges to contrary. Greatest propaganda weapon we could hand to Soviets would be over act which could be successfully presented by Soviet world as conclusive evidence of "aggressive Western imperialism". This was basis of Yugoslav's present policy toward Albania. *[initials]*

[initials] emphasized that there has been no Yugoslav military activities in that region and that nothing on Albanian side of border to justify them.

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